120. Certain needs of Kuttanad.

MR. K. M. CHACKO (*Changanachery taluk, Group II*) said that the major portion of the Changanachery taluk formed part of Kuttanad and the inhabitants thereof were agriculturists who were of three classes, *viz.*, (1) *Kandukrishi tenants*, (2) *Kayal* cultivators, and (3) other *punja* cultivators. The most important need of all these classes of agriculturists was the formation of agricultural boards in all the *pakuthies* at Government cost. The cultivators were put to heavy loss and inconvenience if all the cultivators did not co-operate and put up the necessary bunds properly and in time. A recalcitrant cultivator could by his indifference cause immense loss to his neighbours. Further, a tenant was dependent on the good will of his neighbours for letting in water for his land and draining away water therefrom. To regulate all these and similar things and prevent all avoidable loss to the cultivators, agricultural boards should be established with powers to attend to these things.

Kerosene oil and crude oil were essential for the cultivators at the cultivation season in connection with the draining away water from their fields. But the merchants took advantage of this important need of these cultivators and sold these oils at high rates. It would be a great relief if the sale of these oils be arranged through Government agency without profit.

Cultivation in Kuttanad was a kind of speculation. If, by any chance, such as rise of water due to high tide or breaches of bunds and *chiras*, water rushed to the wet lands made ready for cultivation, all the initial expenses incurred by a cultivator were a waste and the crops a failure. But, in spite of that, he was obliged to pay the tax due. This was hard. In such cases, therefore, the ryots concerned should be granted remission of tax.

The grant of agricultural loans should be expedited. It should be ordered that applications for these loans should be disposed of within three months. In cases where the sanctioned allotments were insufficient and had run out, additional funds should be provided for the loans. It was not desirable to refuse loans on the ground of want of funds. At least Rs. 5 lakhs should be provided every year for the purpose of granting agricultural loans.

Besides this, a provision of Rs. 2 lakhs should be made every year for the grant of special loans to the cultivators of Kuttanad. This amount should be distributed among the different taluks according to their needs. The applications for loans in each taluk should be enquired into and disposed of by a committee consisting of the Tahsildar, the local member for the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly and the local representative of the Legislative Council. The committee should be constituted before the month of Chingam every year. The loans might be made repayable in the same year in which they were issued.

Another need of the Kuttanad cultivator was the adoption of measures to eradicate the disease of paddy plants (wilt disease) and that of the cocoanut palm (nut-fall). The Agricultural Department had not done anything effectively to combat these diseases.

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As regards the *Kandukrishi* tenants, the member said that the rent on *Kandukrishi* lands was commuted into money in order *inter alia* to stop the vagaries of the Revenue subordinates in collecting the tax in kind. But the commutation rate fixed was so high and the fall in the price of paddy so great that the tenants found it difficult to pay the rent at that rate. What the Government then ordered was that the rent might be paid in kind with the result that the old vagaries were repeated causing much loss and inconvenience to the tenants. It would be a great benefit to the tenants if it be ordered that the rent due every year should be paid at the prevailing *nirak* rates adopted by the civil courts.

The *Kayal* cultivators were incurring great loss because of the low price of paddy and the high cost of cultivation. They were well off when the price of paddy was between Re. 1 and Rs. 1¼ per *para*. But with the heavy fall in price, paddy was selling at 2 or even 3 *paras* a rupee, with the result that the ryots found it difficult even to pay the tax. In order to help them at this period of distress the tax on these lands should be reduced temporarily to one-half as in the case of rubber lands, till the price of paddy rose. The time for payment of *taravila* due on *puduval* lands should also be extended.

The levy of license fees on *vallams* in Kuttanad was a hard measure. *Vallams* were indispensable to the inhabitants of Kuttanad for locomotion. Levying a fee on these boats was as hard as levying a fee on pedestrians in the other parts of the State. This fee was over and above the toll to be paid. The license fee should be abolished from the next year onwards.

The levy of a license fee on fishing nets was equally hard. The fishermen's life was a hard lot and their income was meagre. The license fee should be abolished.

Lastly, a lady doctor should be appointed in the Changanachery hospital. Changanachery was an important town in point of population, education, etc. The appointment of a lady doctor had been urged upon the Government by every member from Changanachery. The women patients were suffering untold hardship owing to the absence of a lady doctor, as most of them were averse to consult men doctors. A lady doctor should therefore be appointed without further delay.

In conclusion, the member requested that every officer should be asked to tour all places in Kuttanad. He also requested the Dewan to visit the place in order to have first-hand information about the life of the people there.

DEWAN'S REPLY: The special needs of Kuttanad, Mr. Chacko, have been recognised. They have been mentioned by previous speakers also. Your suggestions will be very carefully considered. And, I hope myself to visit the places soon, when I shall understand the problems better.

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